



BUDDHA'S PHILOSOPHY MORE RELEVANT TODAY

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ABSTRACT

The teachings of Buddha help us understand the doctrine of karma. The 'four noble truths' of Buddhism state that all existence is suffering which is real and almost universal; that the cause of suffering is desire to have and control things and get attached to them, that freedom from suffering is nirvana letting go all desires, and that this is attained through the 'eightfold path' comprising eight aspects in which one must practise right views; right intention to free oneself from attachment, ignorance, and hatefulness; right speech not to be hurtful and abstaining from lying, gossiping; right conduct or action causing no distress to someone's feelings; right livelihood making living appropriately; right effort living by good thoughts; right mindfulness to overcome every negativity effect; and right concentration to achieve a higher state of consciousness. Lord Buddha emphasized four noble truths to mankind. He said that the world is full of suffering. All sufferings have a cause: desire, ignorance and attachment are the causes of suffering. The suffering could be removed by destroying its cause. In order to end suffering, one must know the right path. This is an important part of Lord Buddha's teachings. Buddha preached that the ultimate goal of one's life is to attain Nirvana, the eternal state of peace and bliss, which is free from desire and sorrow, decay or disease and of course from birth and death. Therefore, annihilation of desire is the real problem.

KEYWORDS: Buddha, Teachings, Suffering, Ignorance and consciousness.

INTRODUCTION:

Gautama Buddha or Siddhartha was a contemporary of Mahavira, born in a royal family of the Sakyas at Kapilavastu in the Southern part of present Nepal in the year 566 BC. He renounced the world at the age of twenty nine. He moved from place to place in search of truth for seven years and then attained enlightenment at Bodhi Gaya under pipal tree. From this time onwards, he began to be called the Buddha or the enlightened one. Though his life was spent in royal splendor, it failed to attract the mind of Gautama. As traditions describe, he was deeply affected by the sight of an old man, a sick person, a dead body and an ascetic. The misery of the human life left a deep impact on Gautama. To find a solution to the misery of mankind, he spent years as a wandering ascetic. From a sage called Alara Kalama he learned the technique of meditation and the teachings of the Upanishads. After attaining the supreme knowledge, he proceeded to Sarnath near Varanasi to deliver his first sermon which is known as 'Dharma Chakra Pravartana' (setting in motion the wheel of Dharma). Asvajit, Upali, Magallana, Sariputra and Ananda were the first five disciples of Buddha. His message laid down the foundation of both Buddhist religion and philosophy which in course of time spread far and.

The central theme of Buddha's religion is the eight step path (Ashtangika Marg). The first step is the 'proper vision' leading to the realization that the world is full of sorrows caused by desire, greed etc. The second is 'right aim' which seeks to avoid the engagement of the senses and luxury. It aims to love humanity and increase the happiness in others. 'Right speech' is the third step; it implies the practice of truthfulness promoting mutual friendship. 'Right action' includes abstention from killing, stealing and unselfish deeds. 'Right livelihood' instructs a man to live by pure and honest means. 'Right effort' means proper way of controlling one's senses so as to prevent bad thoughts. The seventh step is 'right awareness' or 'right mindfulness' which means understanding the idea that the body is impermanent and meditation is the means for the removal of worldly evils. The last step is 'right concentration' which will lead to removal of evils generated by attachment to the body and the mind. This will lead to peace and unravel the real truth. Anyone who would follow the noble eightfold path would attain 'nirvana' irrespective of his social origin.

Buddhism stood between the two extremes: unrestrained individualistic self-indulgence and equally individualistic but preposterous ascetic punishment of the body. Hence it's steady rise and its name 'The Middle Way'. The moral doctrines of Buddha were simple. He believed that every individual is the maker of his own destiny. We are born time and again to reap the fruits of our Karma. Good deeds, lead to higher life till salvation is achieved while evil deed hinder our spiritual elevation. One should neither lead a life of luxury nor a life of severe asceticism. The best course to be pursued by an individual is the Middle Path (Madhyama Pratipat or Tatha Grah Marg).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Review of related literature makes the investigator fully aware with the previous work that has been done. It also provides an opportunity of gaining insight into the method, measures, subject and approaches employed:

Morgan, Kenneth W. (1956) 'The Path of the Buddha' "Buddhism is not just a religion of the past or a mere faith as many have thought, but it is a time-tested scientific religion and philosophy which, in the context of the present world-situation, is more relevant today than ever before for establishing world peace.

Radhakrishnan, S. Foreword to. Bapat, P.V (1959), 2500 years of Buddhism, The Master aimed at the development of a new kind of free man, free from all prejudices, intent on working out his own future with reliance on one's own self, i.e. attadipa. But today, more than ever before, we are suffering from "an exhaustion of spirit, an increase of egoism, individual and collective, which makes the ideal of a world society difficult to achieve". Buddhism has an intimate association with the concept of peace. In its long history we hardly find any evidence of violence, killings or religious hatred. "Buddhism wields only one sword, the sword of wisdom and recognizes only one enemy i.e. ignorance".

Ramaiah, G. Sundara, K. Ravi, Ram Joga, S. D (1991) 'The concept of peace in Buddhist Literature' in Buddhism and Peace. Peace and integrity is the central theme of Buddhism. It is indispensable for world peace as a way of securing the integral growth and stability. Buddha's chief motto was that not only all members of the Buddhist order but rather all subjects of state must achieve the ethical perfection and moral integrity which only will produce peace both within as well as outside the state.

Teachings of Buddha:

The sublime position the Buddha has acquired is because of the guidance he has given to the human race through his preachings which though were around 2500 years old, still hold relevance in today's world. He renounced all royal pleasures to discover the basic purpose of life. A true teacher leads by example and the Buddha lead the way by setting an example. His five principles, four noble truths and eight-fold path – all steer us towards a righteous life. In today's world which is highly marred by violence, greed, intolerance and degradation of human values, his teachings offer efficacious ways to combat these maladies. His teachings propose practical remedies to the human predicament. He laid down ethical precepts for a fulfilling life. In this 21st century, where kids and adults frantically are glued to devices and practices that digress them from the main purpose of life, Buddha's core principles of self-control, self-discipline, mindfulness and contentment serve as an antidote to cleanse our mind and body and equip us to lead a stressful life. Be it the Buddha, Mahavir, Adi Shankara or Ashoka and many great gurus, their transformation and lives serve as moral lessons to today's generation. Their quest of knowledge, attempt to ignite minds, timeless propositions form the basis of a society free of prejudice and pollution – both environmental and human minds. Education means the development of the mind which is possible only when minds are open and free of taint. The Buddha's stainless teachings connect us with our inner selves and pave the path for eternal knowledge and happiness.

All societies, worldwide, want to be congenial, healthy and happy. This state can't be achieved when most people have a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important, realistic and valuable than spiritual values. The teachings of Buddha help us understand the doctrine of karma. The 'four noble truths' of Buddhism state that all existence is suffering which is

real and almost universal; that the cause of suffering is desire to have and control things and get attached to them, that freedom from suffering is nirvana letting go all desires, and that this is attained through the 'eightfold path' comprising eight aspects in which one must practise right views; right intention to free oneself from attachment, ignorance, and hatefulness; right speech not to be hurtful and abstaining from lying, gossiping; right conduct or action causing no distress to someone's feelings; right livelihood making living appropriately; right effort living by good thoughts; right mindfulness to overcome every negativity effect; and right concentration to achieve a higher state of consciousness.

Lord Buddha emphasized four noble truths to mankind. He said that the world is full of suffering. All sufferings have a cause: desire, ignorance and attachment are the causes of suffering. The suffering could be removed by destroying its cause. In order to end suffering, one must know the right path. This path is the 'Eight Fold Path'. Buddhism laid emphasis on the law of 'Karma' by which the present is determined by the past actions. If an individual has committed no sins, he is not born again. This is an important part of Lord Buddha's teachings. Buddha preached that the ultimate goal of one's life is to attain Nirvana, the eternal state of peace and bliss, which is free from desire and sorrow, decay or disease and of course from birth and death. Therefore, annihilation of desire is the real problem. Prayers and sacrifices will not end desire nor will rituals and ceremonies as emphasized by Vedic religion but he stressed on moral life of an individual. The teaching of Buddha put forward a serious challenge to the existing Brahmanical order. Buddha's liberal and democratic approach quickly attracted the people of all sections. His attack on the caste system and the supremacy of the Brahmanas was welcomed by the lower orders. Irrespective of caste, creed and sex, people were welcomed in the new order. Buddha rejected the authority of the Vedas and condemned animal sacrifices. He detested the complex and meaningless rituals. He strongly believed that sacrifices and rituals could neither help a person to wash away his sins nor benefit any sinner by performing various ritualistic practices. The practice of social equality on which Buddhism was based was the call of the day. Buddha understood and preached what masses desired at that time. Thus Buddhism represented the spirit of its age. However, the teachings of Buddha is not only for the 6th century B.C., but it is a timeless (akalika) teaching, surely it can be practised by the wise during 21st century as well and in many more centuries or millennia to come.

The Buddha was one of those who were very conscious of the many effects of hatred. He had seen people ruining themselves as a result of hatred. Buddha believed that hatred never ceases by hatred. To the Buddha the only way to solve it is that one party must stop. Loving-kindness, which is the cornerstone of Buddhism, has not been taken by the Buddha as merely a simple ethical principle. He had analysed the principle of lovingkindness into sublime life. A basic concept taught by the Buddha; the four sublime states of mind: Love or Loving-kindness (metta), Compassion (karuna), Sympathetic Joy (mudita), Equanimity (upekkha) provides the answer to all situations arising from social contact. They are great removers of tension, the great peace-makers in social conflict, and the great healers of wounds suffered in the struggle of existence. In today's increasingly complex and interdependent world, we have to acknowledge the existence of other cultures, different ethnic groups and of course other religious faiths. Whether we know it or not, most of us experience this diversity on a daily basis. The conflicts among various regions such as Syria conflict, Arab Spring, unrest in Africa, etc. are the greatest sources of violence in the world and exist solely to kill human beings. Gautam Buddha's teachings of non-violence and belief in the oneness of humanity, contending that many of the world's problems and conflicts arise because man has left those basic tenets behind. Thus, Buddha's message of non-violence, love and compassion is "extremely relevant" in the current environment of insecurity and unrest.

The Buddha's teachings resonate, to a surprising extent, with a secular outlook. He didn't believe in a creator God or insist on the need for a saviour. He said reality was impermanent and insubstantial, and suggested that our failure to live in accordance with it produces suffering. Then he taught practices like meditation that reshape our minds accordingly. Their continuing relevance is seen in the current popularity of mindfulness practices. These have served centuries of Buddhist practitioners and are now being adopted in secular settings from Parliament to schools as an antidote to our speedy, stressful lives. Meditation techniques like Vipassana, Yoga can help us to connect with our inner selves. These techniques are an effective way to cleanse our mind and body and equip us to face the stress of modern life.

Today in scientifically and technologically developed age, though there are many amenities, for easy living and pleasure, people are both physically and mentally not satisfied and do not have a feeling of security. In the world today, there are many multinational and multipurpose projects which are vast for the development of countries. But people are not satisfied with what they have. There is no contentment. Craving, grasping, arising and perishing are the main features in the world. Thus Buddhism has an application today because of its timeless relevance, emanating from a set of eternal values. The ideals of Buddhist philosophy are reflected in the Constitution, especially in the stated principles of equality, fraternity and social justice.

CONCLUSION:

Critiques of modernity say that modern developments have nothing to offer but

insecurity and competitiveness as well as tensions and boredom associated with them. Sometimes it appears true. The teachings of Gautam Buddha offer a few very simple and efficacious methods to combat that. His eternal message of non-violence and compassion continues to inspire humanity across the globe to strive towards a more fulfilling life and a world where all people live together and shape it together into a peaceful, inclusive and sustainable globe.

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